

Review of *Remembering Our Intimacies: Mo'olelo, Aloha 'Āina, and Ea* by Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio (University of Minnesota Press)

by Makana Kushi | Issue 11.2 (Fall 2022), Book Reviews

ABSTRACT Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio foregrounds the intimate in aloha 'āina, a Kanaka Maoli conception of caring for land, or that which feeds. She provides a close reading of the classic Hawaiian epic *Hi'iakaikapoliopole* alongside contemporary Kanaka Maoli battles with settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy. Osorio engages the uniquely Kanaka Maoli genre of mo'olelo by modulating seamlessly between the interpersonal and structural, analysis and composition, and the nineteenth century and the present day.

KEYWORDS queer, sexuality, Hawai`i, indigeneity, translation studies, relationality

Remembering Our Intimacies: Mo'olelo, Aloha 'Āina, and Ea. By Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2021, 232 pp. (paperback) ISBN: 978-1-5179-1030-3. US List: \$25.

Remembering Our Intimacies: Mo'olelo, Aloha 'Āina, and Ea by Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio joins the growing body of Hawaiian language scholars who write about mo'olelo, which she describes as "a diverse collection of stories, histories, prophecies, songs, poems, chants, and genealogies that are written, spoken, sung, chanted, and felt" (14). Beyond Kānaka Maoli, readers invested in the politics of translation, Indigenous literary nationalisms, movements to protect sacred lands, and sexual and gendered ways of being that confront the violences of the heteropatriarchal state will be pulled to this text. However, it generously offers all readers a way to imagine intimate relations beyond the settler-capitalist constructions of land as property and love as patriarchy.

The book opens with a mele (song, chant, poem) demonstrating the book's call to suppressed forms of Kanaka Maoli intimacy, hungry for revival. It characterizes the yearning hero Hi'iakaikapoliopole—of the eponymous epic mo'olelo—speaking to her beloved Hōpoe, embodied by a grove of lehua trees. Setting the scene with this mele,

Hi'iaka—and Osorio—ask “Can you see those strange men / Watching from beyond the page,” “how it seems through them / we have been forgotten” (x). Drawing from *Hi'iakaikapoliopole*, family histories, and aloha 'āina experience, Osorio urges her people to remember the intimate web of connections that should keep Kānaka Maoli accountable to each other and to our homelands in a moment of urgent need.

The book features six chapters bookended with introductory and closing remarks, two poems, two short stories, and the opening mele described above. The first two chapters situate the text through the Kanaka Maoli concepts mo'olelo and aloha 'āina. Chapter 1 maps the book's interventions onto Indigenous queer and feminist theory and Hawaiian language work. Chapter 2 introduces Osorio's method and archive with a careful reflection on language and translation. Four versions of the *Hi'iakaikapoliopole* published in Hawaiian language newspapers between 1861 and 1911 make up the book's core archive. Particularly insightful is Osorio's explanation of her method: “rigorous paraphrasing.” Instead of providing direct translations, Osorio includes extensive direct quotes from the mo'olelo that can be read by Hawaiian speakers. She then follows with shorter paraphrases of her own commentary and context for all readers. Cultural studies scholars who do language work can look to rigorous paraphrasing as an alternative to direct translation, which truncates or misrepresents concepts not easily expressed across epistemologies. For an example, she juxtaposes dictionary definitions of gendered and sexual relation censored by Christian conversion with more expansive ones drawn from her reading of *Hi'iakaikapoliopole*. While the book's components could be described as literary analysis, history, storytelling, creative nonfiction, and poetry, Osorio's shape-shifting interdisciplinary method and creative form are best described as itself a mo'olelo.

Hi'iakaikapoliopole, spotlighted most heavily in Chapters 3 and 4, is a mo'olelo about a family of akua (land deities) making home of Hawai'i, and their intimacies manifested by acts of creation and destruction that still define the island chain's landscapes today. Osorio also describes the mo'olelo as a refuge for queer Kānaka and other queer Natives, who “unsettle white settler logics of belonging” as they revitalize Indigenous structures of relation (6). Chapter 3 features lessons about different kinds of pilina (intimacy, multifaceted structures of relationality) among lovers and family. Pilina creates a structure in which people are accountable to loved ones, to their loved ones' loved ones, and so on in a growing network of connections. Chapter 4 argues that pilina among people begets pilina to land. Lovemaking scenes are narrated not in physical terms, but as exaltation of the beauty of fragrant flowers, lush groves, steep cliff sides, and more. To exemplify this in a contemporary context, Osorio offers an original poem about the pilina between herself and her wahine with scenes from each of their homelands.

Chapters 5 and 6 apply lessons from *Hi'iakaikapoliopole* to contemporary Kanaka Maoli resistance to the settler state. Chapter 5 contributes to conversations in Indigenous and ethnic studies around positionality, solidarity, and accountability. Kānaka Maoli, their allies, settlers, and tourists have different relationships to the land given their identities, but also because of the ways they do and do not enact pilina. Osorio uses her own displacement from Waikīkī to illustrate the difficult, necessary process of Kānaka Maoli restoring pilina to lands abused and overrun by tourism and capitalism. While Kānaka Maoli have an exclusive *familial* relationship to our 'āina, other *familiar* connections such as the widely appropriated "kama'āina" should be earned with commitment to caring for land and offered by Kānaka Maoli, rather than claimed through self-appointment or purchase. She concludes, "The only way to truly know and love our home is to know and love our people" (137).

Chapter 6 brings lessons from the mo'olelo in conversation with the Kū Kia'i Mauna movement. After laying out the fifty-year legal history of the private yet state-backed Thirty Meter Telescope project, Osorio asks whether Western law remains the only or the most appropriate path of resistance for Kānaka Maoli. The chapter then uses mo'olelo to disentangle Kanaka concepts of leadership and land-based accountability from settler ideas of law and property. Osorio points to mo'olelo moments in which leaders are checked for abusing their power and betraying their relations. Incisively, she shows that Kanaka Maoli governance is not distinguished from the settler nation state by "a lack of violence or a lack of hierarchy but its status as a system in which violence and hierarchies are checked when abused" (168).

In the poems and short stories nestled among the chapters, there are favorite songs, childhood memories, and a poetic retelling of the standoff at Mauna Kea that attest to the resilience of pilina living on in spite of colonization. Osorio ends the book "A'ole i pau," a Kanaka way of saying "to be continued." Indeed, *Remembering Our Intimacies* is a generative opening that invites future Kanaka intellectuals and aloha 'āina to dive into the vast and deep Hawaiian language archive and more broadly into Indigenous ways of governing and relating. Her insights on intimacy remind us that to strive for a just future, we must love each other the way we love the land.

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Having learned 'ōlelo Hawai'i in a Hawaiian language immersion school setting as a child, she is dedicated to the cultivation of resurgent Indigenous educational spaces.

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